

Libya

Facts and Statistics

Location: Northern Africa, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Egypt and Tunisia

Capital: Tripoli

Climate: Mediterranean along coast; dry, extreme desert interior

Population: 6,173,579 (July 2008 est.)

Ethnic Make-up: Berber and Arab 97%, other 3% (includes Greeks, Maltese, Italians, Egyptians, Pakistanis, Turks, Indians, and Tunisians)

Religions: Muslim 97%, other 3%

Government: Jamahiriya (a state of the masses) in theory, governed by the populace through local councils

Language in Libya

The main language spoken in Libya is Arabic, which is also the official language. Tamazight (i.e. Berber languages), which do not have official status, are spoken by Libyan Berbers. Berber speakers live above all in the Jebel Nafusa region (Tripolitania), the town of Zuwarah on the coast, and the city-oases of Ghadames, Ghat and Awjila. In addition, Tuaregs speak Tamahaq, the only known Northern Tamasheq language. Italian and English are sometimes spoken in the big cities, although Italian speakers are mainly among the older generation.

Libyan Society and Culture

The People

Most Libyans consider themselves Arabs, although there is a strong Berber influence in the population. Nearly 98% of the population is Berber-Arabic. There are small communities of Greeks, Maltese, and Italians.

About 20% of the population are foreign workers, mostly from other Arab countries such as Egypt, the Sudan, and Tunisia.

Religion

As Arabs the vast majority of Libyans are Muslim. Colonel Qaddafi states that Islam is the only viable system that can help answer man's political, economic and social problems on earth and provide him with happiness in the world to come. In November 1973, a new code of law appeared emphasizing Sharia law in all facets of the Libyan legal system. After the Revolution in September 1969 and in compliance with Islamic law, alcoholic beverages were outlawed. Bars and nightclubs were closed, and modest and provocative entertainment was banned. The use of the Islamic Hijri calendar was also made mandatory.

For more information about Islam click > [An Introduction to Islam](#)

Family Life

Until fairly recently the extended family was the norm. Today it is increasingly common for young couples to set up home on their own. This is especially true of Tripoli.

It is important for Libyans to maintain the dignity, honor and a good reputation of their families through their own conduct. This is a collective culture. In order to maintain a sense of harmony, people will act with decorum at all times and not do anything to cause someone else public embarrassment. Personal feelings and needs are often subjugated for the good of the group.